

VZCZCXRO4182
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHNC #0454/01 0871317
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 281317Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5757
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0501

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000454

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2106
TAGS: [UN](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EUN](#) [TU](#) [CY](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH CYPRIOT LEADER TALAT SAYS TECHNICAL TALKS
WILL GO AHEAD

REF: A. NICOSIA 447
[1](#)B. NICOSIA 380

Classified By: Ambassador R. Schlicher, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) On March 27, a tired but healthy-looking Mehmet Ali Talat briefed Ambassador Schlicher on his meeting with UNFICYP Chief Michael Moeller earlier that day. Talat's meetings with Moeller and the Ambassador were his first meetings with foreigners since he underwent unexpected heart surgery in February (ref a). Both the Ambassador and Moeller saw Talat at his Kyrenia home; Talat expects to return to his office at the "Presidency" in about a week.

[1](#)2. (C) Talat came out swinging, telling the Ambassador he had made clear to Moeller his dismay with the declaration that emerged from the February 28 Annan-Papadopoulos meeting in Paris (ref b). He worried that the UN was "changing the balance" in its approach to the Cyprus problem to the detriment of the Turkish Cypriots. Talat noted that the UNSYG had referred to Papadopoulos as "President of Cyprus," rather than "the Greek Cypriot Leader" (which was the term of art Talat claimed the UN had previously used in the context of its Cyprus mediation efforts). Talat further worried that the Secretary General had given in to "Greek Cypriot delaying tactics" by quietly shelving his Good Offices Report -- and backing off the demand that Papadopoulos present his list of desired changes to the Annan Plan with "clarity and finality." For the Turkish Cypriots, the Annan Plan was still the point of departure for substantive talks, and Talat said he would not reengage on settlement-related issues until the Greek Cypriots had given a "clear picture" of what they wanted to change in the Plan. All these concerns, Talat said, would be expressed in a forthcoming letter to the SYG.

[1](#)3. (C) Nonetheless, Talat said that U/SYG Gambari's letter had helped create a "better climate" between the Turkish Cypriots and the UN -- allowing Talat to see Moeller and opening the door for the start of technical talks on the ten points the two sides had agreed to prior to Paris. Talat said his U/S, Rasit Pertev, would meet with Moeller and Tasos Tzionis (Papadopoulos's diplomatic advisor) "by the end of this week or early next week" to get the process moving. Talat was skeptical, however, that the talks would bear fruit as long as the Greek Cypriots refused to have any dealings with officials of the "TRNC." He suggested that Papadopoulos would simply use the talks to distract attention from his "intransigence" on settlement matters, stalling in the UN forum while using Turkey's EU accession process to press Ankara for unilateral concessions on Cyprus.

[1](#)4. (C) The Ambassador stressed the importance of allowing technical talks to move ahead quickly, and reiterated USG readiness to support the technical committees where appropriate. It was important that the Turkish Cypriots continue their dialogue with the UN and Moeller, and not allow themselves to be painted as the intransigent party.

The Ambassador encouraged Talat not to react to the public statements made by ROC officials or to the "spin" in the Greek Cypriot media. The UN understood that the process could only move forward into more sensitive political waters if both sides agreed. In the meantime, technical talks might produce positive results on certain agenda items -- and would put Papadopoulos's intentions to the test. "We'll see," Talat said. Recalling how his doctors in Turkey had cooperated closely during his operation despite an initial disagreement over which treatment was best, Talat acknowledged that "consultation and communication" were very important.

15. (C) On the issue of the Committee on Missing Persons, the Ambassador urged Talat to move quickly on giving his consent to the UN's proposed third member. Talat agreed he would do so, once the candidate's "character" had been vetted by "my friends." Meanwhile, Talat expressed skepticism about Papadopoulos's stated willingness to meet him for the purpose of discussing the Missing. Although he did not rule out such a meeting, Talat questioned the need to discuss the CMP. The work of the Committee was going well, Talat insisted, and there was little for them to talk about. Papadopoulos's willingness to discuss only the Missing, he suggested, was a ruse designed to answer demands that he see Talat -- without actually discussing serious issues.

16. (C) COMMENT. Although Talat devoted significant time to his regular litany of complaints about the "rapacious" Greek Cypriot leadership, the tone of this meeting was actually fairly constructive. Dialogue between the Turkish Cypriots and the UN -- specifically SRSg Moeller -- has resumed, and the start of technical talks appears to be that much closer. Furthermore, with Talat now seeing visitors and resuming an

NICOSIA 00000454 002 OF 002

active role in Turkish Cypriot "foreign policy," it seems that the period of rudderless drift is coming to an end. This is a good thing; unlike many of his lower-ranking colleagues who gave the UN a cold shoulder when he was sick, Talat seems to understand the importance of "consultation and communication."

17. (C) The challenge now will be to encourage Talat to maintain a constructive attitude, and not allow his anger at Papadopoulos (or pressure from his nationalist flank) to derail UN-brokered technical talks. In the process, he must also find a way to avoid being perceived as stalling or refusing to find a way forward in resuming a genuine political track. Papadopoulos clearly senses that his relative success in "spinning" the Paris meeting, enhanced by the post-Paris bungling of a Talat-less "TRNC," have for the moment let him seem less than intransigent on the political issues. The Turkish Cypriots (and the Turks) need to reverse this equation through creative engagement with the UN. END COMMENT.

END COMMENT.
SCHLICHER